



# THE SAPT BHANGI NAYA

THE PLURALISTIC ARGUMENT  
OF THE JAIN DIALECTICS

KANNOSMAL M. A.



THE  
*Saptbhangi Naya*

or

THE PLURALISTIC ARGUMENT OF  
THE JAIN DIALECTICS.

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION.

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Jainism is really a pluralistic doctrine called Anekântvâda (अनेकान्तवाद) or Syâdvâda (स्याद्वाद). Anekântvâda means assuming various qualities or properties in an object. Syâdvâda means the assuming of one quality or function in an object from some particular point of view for a time—not for all times. The Anekânt or Syâdvâda may therefore be called a doctrine of an unlimited variety of points of views. This doctrine points to the relativity of knowledge concerning all the objects of the world. The force which constitutes the specific form of an object is its reality. It is in consequence of this reality that an object is called real in Jainism.

According to Syâdvâda philosophers, a thing that is real, has three characteristics,—production, destruction and stability. Every object that seems to be stable is liable to both production and destruction. Take for instance, a mango tree. It always appears to bear leaves. Do all these leaves always remain the same? No, the leaves which we see on it this year, would not remain the same next year. The leaves that it bore

last year, have died out this year, and the leaves that we see this year, will disappear next year. Just as this mango tree, always seeming to bear leaves, is liable to the changes of production and destruction in so far as its leaves are concerned, so this world, appearing to be stable in some part, is always undergoing changes of production and dissolution in other parts. The stable part of an object is called Dravya (Substance) and its unstable parts undergoing production and dissolution, **पर्याय** or phenomenal changing form. All objects are eternal in their aspect of Dravya or substance but non eternal in their aspect of **पर्याय** or phenomenal form. It may be borne in mind that a substance and its changes are not mutually different. One is vitally related to the other. Thus all objects are numerously inter-related to one another. According to the Jain philosophy, the specific or individual form or essence of an object cannot be established, unless the knowledge of its interrelations is assumed. When we speak of a man, the relative knowledge of objects other than that man, springs up of itself. Similarly, when we speak of Aryans, the idea of non-Aryans springs up ; when we speak of Indians, the idea of non-

Indians or foreigners spontaneously springs up. The idea of virtue suggests the idea of vice ; the idea of justice that of injustice. Thus the knowledge of one thing unavoidably suggests the relative knowledge of other objects. This doctrine of pluralism has been elaborated to show that an object has various qualities or functions from the point of view of the relativity of knowledge. Lord Mahavir, keeping it in view, has said that a man who knows only one object with all its properties, knows all things. He may be said to be all-knowing

The Jain philosophy considers all objects as real, unreal, and real and unreal at the same time. An object is real in view of its nature, time, place etc. and unreal in view of the nature, time, place etc., of other objects.

Man, from the point of view of the essential qualities of man, is real and from the point of view of qualities contrary to them, unreal. In this way a man is real and unreal, and real and unreal at the same time from the view point of this pluralistic argument. The word 'śat' (maybe) is used to denote the reality and unreality etc., of objects. It means 'somehow' 'maybe'



'perhaps' etc. If you ask whether a thing exists, the answer would be 'maybe' it exists, that is it exists from some particular point of view. This statement naturally leads one to think that it does not exist from some other point of view. The adoption of such an attitude in looking at things is called Syâdvâda or Pluralism. Its synonym is 'Anekântvâda', that is looking at a thing from a variety of view points. The word 'ant' in 'Anekântvâda' signifies determining or judging of a thing definitely. To say definitely that a thing is real or to say that a thing is unreal, in other words, looking at a thing from only one point of view and then attempting to determine its nature definitely is called Ekântvâda or monistic argument. To consider a thing real from some particular point of view ; to consider it unreal from some other point of view, or to consider it both real and unreal from a third point of view is Anekântvâda or Pluralistic argument.

The Syâdvâda philosophers in conformity with this pluralistic doctrine, recognize every thing to be eternal or non-eternal or having innumerable properties. This method undertakes to look at a thing in all its aspects and relations

from a variety of view points and then to produce full and complete knowledge about it. Different philosophers and thinkers of the world have judged of the various objects of the universe from various points of views. It would be well, if, by resorting to the Pluralistic argument, their different theories or opinions are compared and truth sifted out of them, discarding the untruth. This should be the aim of this pluralistic dialectics

Those who have not looked minutely into the merits of Syâdvâda doctrine, doubt (many have doubted so in the past) its soundness in as much as its mutually conflicting characteristics or qualities such as eternal and non-eternal etc., can exist in a thing. According to it, such qualities as cold and heat can exist in one object. This objection can well be met by the explanation of the Syâdvâda doctrine given above, but it would be well to illustrate it by an example.

When this doctrine recognizes in an object what would appear to be conflicting qualities, it does not do so dogmatically from a determinative point of view. It does so only in view of the various points of view from which a thing can

be seen and judged. From the points of view of family relations, a man can be a father, a son, a grandfather, a grand son, an uncle, a maternal uncle, a great grandfather, a brother, a nephew, a cousin, a father-in-law, a son-in-law, a brother-in-law etc. etc. at the same time. Just as these various apparently conflicting relations can be spoken of in respect to a man, so mutually contradictory qualities can be attributed to all other objects of the world. In this way contradictory qualities or functions can be spoken of in respect to things.

The points of view in regard to the examination of objects are not more than seven according to the Syâdvâda doctrine. They are called Bhangas or premises. Just as 3 and 4 make 7 according to the rules of Arithmetic, so only seven points of view can be posited concerning the reality and unreality of things according to the pluralistic doctrine. Answering the seven questions arising from these seven points of view, is called the Saptbhāgi Naya or the Pluralistic argument. The seven premises are primarily these :—

1st—Maybe it exists.

2nd—Maybe it does not exist.

3rd—Maybe it exists and does not exist.

4th—Maybe it is indescribable.

5th—Maybe it exists and is indescribable.

6th—Maybe it does not exist and is indescribable.

7th—Maybe it exists and does not exist and is indescribable.

This philosophical doctrine is very abstruse and recondite. To understand its truth thoroughly presupposes a considerable knowledge of philosophy. The philosophers teaching this doctrine have written voluminous works to explain and expound its truth and subtleties. If this method of thinking is adopted in looking at the various religious tenets and philosophical creeds prevailing in India, which appear to be mutually conflicting occasioning considerable differences of opinions, a perceptible change towards their reconciliation might occur.

Lala Kannoomal M. A. has briefly explained the subtleties and merits of this pluralistic doctrine called Saptbhāgi Naya in this book. Though briefly but very lucidly, he has explained the main principles of this doctrine, and it is hoped that the lover of philosophical truth would derive benefit from it.

The following is an extract from a speech recently delivered in Guziat by Professor Anand Shankar Dhruva, a well-known Scholar —

“The Syâdvâda doctrine has been given to the world after carefully sifting out the truth of a variety of philosophical doctrines. It does not originate, as some seem to think, from a vague indefinite and doubtful mental attitude in regard to things. It gives a practically definite knowledge of a thing from a particular point of view. Unless an object has been viewed and judged from a variety of points of view, we can not have its thorough knowledge. For gaining such a knowledge, the Syâdvâda doctrine is a specially fitted and useful instrument. There are people who say that this doctrine—the doctrine propounded by Lord Mahavir, is a doctrine of doubt. I do not agree with them. The Syâdvâda doctrine is not a doctrine of doubt. It enables a man to look at things with a wide and liberal view. It teaches us how and in what manner to look at the things of this universe ”

BARODA. } MUNI JINVIJAYA.  
5th April 1917.

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NOTE —The above introduction was originally written in Hindi which has been rendered into English by the writer's permission.

# THE SAPTBHANGI NAYA

OR

The pluralistic argument of the Jain dialectics.

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The great argument by which Jain dialecticians seek to ascertain the truth of all animate and inanimate things in the world is called the Saptbhangi Naya, the sevenfold argument-in that it is made up of seven propositions, each revealing a partial truth, but all combined, disclosing the maximum of truth that is possible about a thing. This is a position of liberal pluralism as contrasted with dogmatic monism in viewing things and forming judgments thereon. For instance, if the question is whether a thing exists or no, the Jain dialectician would look at it from different points of views before arriving at a conclusion. He would not commit himself to any judgment by taking into consideration only one point of view of the question as other philosophers do. Let us cast the question into the form of a concrete example and briefly survey the view-points of the followers of some of the leading philosophical doctrines in the East and the West. The concrete example may be the

question whether a pot exists or does not exist. In regard to this question, a Realist would say that the pot exists as it is, independent of all its mental association. It has an existence of its own and does not depend for it upon the mind. An Idealist would say that the pot has no existence in the world outside. It is simply the projection of a mental image. There is no matter outside the mind. A Nominalist would say that although it is the mind that conjures up the image of the pot, yet this can be done only at the sight of a particular sign existing outside the mind. A pot is, therefore, a sign in the outward world which calls up its image in the mind. A Buddistic philosopher would say that a pot is a flux of changes occurring every moment and has no matter except that represented by the continuous stream of changes. A modern French philosopher of great reputation, namely Mr. Bergson has taken a similar view of the matter. A perceptionalist of Berkeley's School would say that over and above the perceptions that we have in the mind, there is no extra-mental substratum in which these perceptions inhere. The pot, therefore, is only a

bundle of qualities without any substratum containing them. A follower of Herbert Spencer or for matter of that of the Positivist School would say that the pot is a vivid idea, the cause of which is unknowable. A Vedântî would say that the pot is a figment of illusion, a thing of nescience, an object having no more substantial existence than a dream ; all permanent and enduring existence being no other than the Brahm itself. All these philosophers look at the pot more or less from one dominating point of view and arrive at their respective conclusions about it, but the Jain philosopher does not rest contented with only one point of view, however important it may be, but proceeds to examine it from various view-points. These various view-points have been reduced to seven underlying views represented by the seven parts or propositions of the Saptbhagi Naya. These propositions are mainly of two kinds—Universal (Praman) and Particular (Naya) propositions adopting respectively the pluralistic and the monistic views concerning the truth of things.

The following are these seven propositions with reference to the concrete illustration of the pot :—



1. Maybe the pot exists.
2. Maybe the pot does not exist.
3. Maybe the pot exists and does not exist.
4. Maybe the pot is indescribable.
5. Maybe the pot exists and is indescribable.
6. Maybe the pot does not exist and is indescribable.
7. Maybe the pot exists, does not exist and is indescribable.

Before proceeding to explain the sense of each of the above propositions, it would be well to explain some of the words or expressions used in them, which have a peculiar significance from the point of view of the Jain dialectics.

### I.—‘MAYBE.’

The expression ‘Maybe’ in these propositions indicates a view of pluralism concerning things, and this renders them broad enough to admit of a larger consideration than that which its absence would mean.

## II.—‘EXISTENCE.’

The word ‘existence’ includes all its different modes of existence which, according to the ancient logicians, are eight referring to *Time, Individual form, Sense, Relation, Contributory part, Receptivity, Association and Word.*

The eight modes of existence are explained as follows :—

(1) *Time*—The mode of existence with reference to time indicates that at the time when the quality of existence is predicated of the pot, the quality of non-existence of cloth or stone or the quality of being indescribable, can as well be predicated of it. In other words, the pot has many qualities at the same time. Therefore, as far as the consideration of Time is concerned, all the qualities of the pot are inseparable from one another.

(2) *Individual form.*—Just as the pot has the form of existence, it also includes a variety of the forms of other qualities. The form in which qualities reside in a substance is its individual form. In other words, many qualities reside in the form

of the pot. The pot as far as its individual form is concerned, is inseparable from the forms of all these qualities.

(3) **Sense.**—In the same sense in which the matter in the form of the pot has the quality of existence, it also includes other qualities. Therefore, with reference to sense, the pot is the substratum of all its qualities.

(4) **Relation.**—Just as the expression 'Maybe' is related to the quality of existence, it is related to other qualities of the pot too. This is the identity of relations.

(5) **Contributory part.**—The part which the quality of existence plays in regard to the pot, is also played by other qualities. So, as far as the contributory part is concerned, it is the same.

(6) **Receptivity of qualities.**—In the same portion of the pot in which the quality of existence resides, the qualities of non-existence and indescribability also reside. Thus the receptivity of qualities is the same throughout.

(7) **Association.**—Just as the quality of exis-

tence is associated with it inseparately, so are all other qualities. This is the identity of association.

(8) Word.—Just as the quality of existence is signified by the word 'is', so are its other qualities signified by it. This is the verbal identity.

### III — 'POT.'

The word 'pot' is taken in all the seven propositions with reference to all its forms. These forms are principally two—the form from the point of view of the matter, of which it is made, and its form in view of the different changes, which its matter assumes. These forms may respectively be called the material and the phenomenal forms of the pot. The material form of a thing is determined by its *name, locality, matter and time of existence*. The phenomenal form is characterized by the absence of these factors.

The four determining factors of the material form are thus explained.—

- (a) The name of the pot points to something that has a contracted neck.
- (b) The locality of the pot points to the place where it is standing.

- (c) The matter of the pot is the earth or clay of which it is made.
- (d) The time of existence of the pot is the present time in which it exists.

These four characteristics go to make up the individual form of the pot. Their absence makes its contrary form.

Having briefly dwelt upon these preliminaries, I now proceed to explain each of the seven propositions of the Saptbhangi argument.

1. The proposition, 'Maybe the pot exists' means that the pot exists as far as its own individual form is concerned by reason of its name, locality, matter and time. Its name points to an idea of something with a crooked neck, its locality is the place in which it stands, its matter is the earth of which it is made up and its time is the present time in which it exists.

The expression 'Maybe' indicates that the pot is not confined to only the properties now pointed out but also includes many other qualities. In other words, it is indicative of the pluralistic position of the Jain philosophers in regard to all things.

In this proposition, the 'pot' is looked at primarily from the point of view of its existence.

2. The proposition 'Maybe the pot does not exist' means that the pot does not exist if looked at from the point of view of the absence of the characteristics of its name, locality, material and time. To elucidate, the pot exists in reference to its own name but does not exist with reference to the names of other things such as a horse, a cloth, a house &c., &c. The pot exists in its own locality but does not exist in other localities. For instance, the pot in question stands on a piece of stone but there are also many other pieces of stone, wooden planks, roofs etc., where that pot is not standing. As far as these latter localities are concerned, the pot does not stand but as far as the locality of the piece of stone where it is standing, is concerned, it exists. The pot exists of its material-earth, but it does not exist as far as other materials such as gold, copper, brass &c., are concerned. The pot exists in the present time but does not exist in the time preceding its manufacture or succeeding its destruction *i.e.* the past and the future times.

'May-be the pot exists, does not exist and is indescribable' means that the pot exists owing to its material form, does not exist in regard to its changing phenomenal forms and is indescribable if both the points of views are assumed simultaneously.

Here the predominance of the point of view of indescribability is dominated by the existence and the inexistence of the pot.

The gist is that when the truth of a thing is to be ascertained, it should not be examined only from one point of view, and definite judgment pronounced concerning it. Every object has innumerable aspects which should all be taken into consideration. The Jains hold that every thing can be seen from seven points of view, every one of which is true but the whole truth lies in the combination of all these seven views. This declaration of judgment in regard to every thing, is a peculiar and unique method of the Jain dialectics.

Just as existence is applied to every thing, the terms *eternal* and *non-eternal*, *one* and *many* can similarly be applied to it. The propositions will be the same with the change of these words.

For instance, May-be the pot is eternal (*i.e.* it is eternal in view of its matter-earth). Maybe the pot is non-eternal (in view of its changing forms). Similarly with the words *one* and *many*. May-be the pot is one (in view of its matter). May-be the pot is many (in view of its many changing forms).

### Monistic and Pluralistic Aspects.

The Monistic aspect admits of two variations—true and false. Similar is the case with the pluralistic doctrine. An object has many properties. When one of these properties is taken into consideration without denying its other properties, it is true Monism. If only one property is taken into consideration and its other properties denied it is then false Monism.

The inference or conclusion drawn from the examination and determination of all the properties in an object without infringing the proofs of perception, is Pluralism. When an examination is opposed to this evidence, it is false Pluralism. The true Monism is a particular proposition (*Naya*) but the false Monism is a fallacy. Similarly, true Pluralism is an universal proposition (*Praman*), but false Pluralism is a



fallacy. Jain logic or Saptbhangi Naya recognises true Monism and true Pluralism, and repudiates false Monism and false Pluralism. Its first proposition is based on true Monism ; second on true Pluralism ; third on both Monism and Pluralism ; fourth on both these views taken simultaneously, fifth on Monism and the simultaneous consideration of both the views ; sixth on Pluralism and the simultaneous consideration of both the views ; and the seventh on Monism and Pluralism and the simultaneous consideration of both the views.

The Saptbhangi argument is not exclusively pluralistic, it includes Monism as well. If Monism is denied, then Pluralism which is made up of Monistic propositions would itself be denied. If branches and stems of a tree are denied, then the tree itself, which is made up of them, would stand denied.

In the Saptbhangi Naya, the first two and the fourth propositions based on existence and non-existence of things, are principal and the propositions from 3 to 7 except the fourth, are made up by combining them.

With the exception of Jainism all other

religions recognise only the Monistic view of things by giving a predominating preference to one of their many aspects. Their position is therefore, weak. Jainism, on the other hand, recognises a Pluralistic view which includes the Monistic position as well. It is, therefore, strong and invincible. The errors that arise from the adoption of a purely Monistic view are pointed out below by referring to some of the philosophical tenets of the non-Jains.

### Sankhya Philosophy.

The Sankhya Philosophy recognizes only the primordial matter with reference to its elements, not its phenomena. From its standpoint, only the first proposition of the Saptbhāgi argument is true. But the phenomena are real as well, as shown by experience; therefore, this position is not sound.

### Buddhism.

Buddhism believes only in the stream of constant changes and holds that changes alone constitute substance, if there is any. It denies that there is any substratum behind the changes. From its standpoint, only the second proposition of this argument is true. But experience shows that pots have clay for their substratum.

and ornaments &c., gold. This position, too, is untenable on this ground.

Those who say that things are indescribable, are guilty of self-contradiction because their contention that things are indescribable, is opposed to their saying so. Suppose a man says that he always observes the vow of silence. The question is, if he always observes silence, how can he say that he does it. His speaking thus would be breaking his vow. Therefore, the third proposition alone is not sufficient.

Similarly other propositions if taken singly, are not sufficient.

### REFUTATIONS OF OBJECTIONS RAISED BY CRITICS AGAINST THE PLURALISTIC POSITION:—

1. Some say that the Pluralistic doctrine involves the fallacy of Chhal (fraud). This is not the case because, whereas in the fallacy of Chhal, one word has two meanings, no word in this argument is of such a nature. In the example that Dev-Dutta has a Nava blanket, the word Nava means new as well as nine. So it may mean that Dev-dutta has a new blanket or that Devdutta has nine blankets. To declare the existence of an object from one point of view and to declare its

non-existence from another point of view, is not to indulge in a *pun*, and thus to be guilty of this fallacy. The objection is, therefore, futile.--

2. The second objection is that the Pluralistic position is liable to the fallacy of doubt. In the occurrence of this fallacy, the following elements enter :—

(a) Seeing only a Common factor of two things.

(b) Not seeing the peculiar features which they involve.

(c) Calling to mind by memory the peculiar features of only one thing.

For instance, a post is seen in the dusk of an evening. Its common factor of resembling a man is seen, but the individual characteristics of the post and man such as the nest of birds &c., on the post or the hands and feet of man are not seen. Now calling to mind by memory the peculiar features of man, the post is confounded with a man.

These circumstances do not apply to the Pluralistic doctrine, because each object has its individual as well as universal aspects.

3. The third objection is that the pluralistic position is liable to the eight fallacies of contradiction —

(1) The application of existence and non-existence to the something is contradiction. The reply is that calling a thing both a pot and a cloth is contradiction, *i. e.* its existence being opposed to its non-existence. These can of course be the contradictory terms. But when we ascribe existence to the pot from the view-point of its matter and non-existence to it from the view point of its changing forms, we are not guilty of contradiction. From our point of view, a thing can admit of both existence and non-existence. From its own peculiar characteristics, it can be said to exist and from the view-point of its negative characteristics, it may be said not to exist.

(2) The assumption of existence and non-existence in the same object, is to say that they are both contained in one receptacle. This is the fallacy of *Vaiadhi*kaian. There ought to be two

receptacles for these different qualities. The reply is that although a tree is only one receptacle, it contains both the qualities of stability and mobility. A thing can have red, black and yellow colours at the same time. Thus the pluralistic view of things is sound.

- (3) The pluralistic argument is liable to the fallacy of Anavastha which means absence of finality in a series of statements. Statement after statement is made about the pot without observing any established rule regarding the finality of things. The answer is that we have already proved that a thing contains a number of qualities, and in predicating these qualities in regard to it, no such fallacy is incurred.
- (4) This argument is liable to the fallacy of confusion (Sankar) inasmuch as many confusing things are said of the same object. The answer is that what we say of it, is established by actual experience. This fallacy steps in only when

some thing is established in opposition to experience.

- (5) The fallacy of inter-mingling of qualities (Vaitukar) is also imputed to this argument, inasmuch as both existence and non-existence are equally maintained in regard to a thing. One obstructs the other. The answer is that existence is predicated of the pot in view of its material form and non-existence in view of its phenomenal form. Therefore, there is no such fallacy.
- (6) The fallacy of doubt objected to, has already been refuted.
- (7) The fallacy of Apratipatti—want of understanding—disappears when it is once admitted that the argument is not liable to the fallacy of doubt. Where there is no doubt, there is no lack of understanding.
- (8) The argument is not liable even to the fallacy of Abhava (negation); for this fallacy arises out of the fallacy of Apratipati which has already been repudiated. When there is lack of

understanding, a thing appears to be both existent and non-existent, but it has been proved that there is no lack of understanding; therefore, there is no *Abhava* or negation.

It is shown below that other philosophies are also really pluralistic, though they do not profess to be so.

### **Sankhyas.**

*(Followers of the Sankhya philosophy.)*

Sankhya declares the even-condition of *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* to be *Prakriti* which includes numerous things having different forms and properties such as smallness, driness, heat, cold &c. By recognizing these varieties in one substance, the pluralistic position has been tacitly accepted.

There is only one substance but it has many aspects. The combination of three qualities is *Pradhan* or *Prakriti* which means one thing having many forms *i.e.* the pluralistic position about them.

### **Naiyayakas.**

*(Followers of the Nyaya philosophy.)*

They accept both the common and the special forms of things. The pervasion of one principle in many is the common form, and the differences



from one another is the special form. There is only one thing which is held to be both common and special. Happiness and action are both common and special according to this view.

### Baudhas.

*(Followers of the Budhistic Philosophy.)*

They consider the knowledge of a Mechak stone to be one and manifold, the Mechak stone having five colours. Its knowledge is not one image.

### Charvakas (Materialists).

They say that consciousness or life is the result of the combination of four elements—earth, water, heat and air, just as intoxication is the result of the inter-mixing of *Kodal* &c. materials. Their meaning is that earth &c., though different, have one common life.

### Mimansakas.

*(Followers of the Mimansa Philosophy.)*

They believe that the knower, the knowledge and the knowable are all included in one knowledge. "I know the pot." In this sentence all the three forms of knowledge are included. This is tacitly the pluralistic position.



